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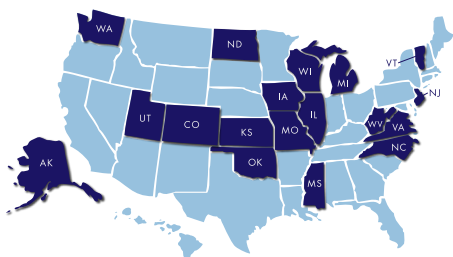
The Dynamic Learning Maps Alternate Assessment System Consortium is composed of 18 states and additional partner agencies. The DLM Consortium is committed to developing a computer-based assessment for K–12 public school students with significant cognitive disabilities. General state assessments, even with accommodations, are not appropriate for these students, who compose approximately 1% of students in this grade range.

The DLM Consortium is led by the Center for Educational Testing and Evaluation at the University of Kansas, and is funded through a five-year grant awarded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs. The assessment will be implemented during the 2014–2015 school year.

The DLM Consortium is one of two multistate consortia to receive federal grants to create a next generation alternate assessment linked to the Common Core State Standards in math and English language arts for the 1% population. DLM member states are involved during every phase of assessment development.

DLM Consortium States

Alaska • Colorado • Illinois • Iowa
Kansas • Michigan • Mississippi
Missouri • New Jersey • North Carolina
North Dakota • Oklahoma • Utah
Vermont • Virginia • Washington
West Virginia • Wisconsin



CONSORTIUM ESTABLISHES DLM-AAS PARTICIPATION GUIDELINES

Early this fall, the Dynamic Learning Maps Alternate Assessment System Consortium (DLM-AAS) took a substantial step forward in policy when members agreed on student-participation guidelines.

“Historically states have varied in of the language they have used to describe what ‘significant cognitive disabilities’ means and who should take the alternate assessment,” said Dr. Neal Kingston, Director of the Dynamic Learning Maps Project and Professor in the Department of Psychology and Research in Education at the University of Kansas. “This can be a problem when children change school districts, especially if they move over state lines. Who are those approximately one percent of all schoolchildren who will take the alternate assessment test? The challenge is to reach a consensus on who those students are.”

To qualify a student for DLM-AAS participation, educators must answer yes to each of three questions:

- Does the student have a significant cognitive disability?
- Are DLM Essential Elements the primary content standards for the student’s instruction?
- Does the student require extensive direct individualized instruction and substantial supports to achieve measureable gains in the grade- and age-appropriate curriculum?

“The consortium has adopted this as our official guidance,” Kingston said. “The adoption of this guidance is a significant step. States can make their own modifications as needed to fit their particular policies—for example, if a state has had particular issues in the past they might want to offer additional clarification. This is meant to serve as guidance; it’s not a mandate.”

The 2012-2013 DLM First Contact Survey collected data from consortium members on students who were candidates for the alternate assessment. Each student’s teacher—the individual with the deepest, firsthand knowledge of the student—responded to the census.

“DLM-AAS aims to provide educators with a comprehensive system that A) supports student learning and B) measures what students with significant cognitive disabilities know and can do.”

The results described the student population that is likely to participate in DLM learning and assessment. The majority of students in the sample were classified as students with intellectual disabilities (44%), with autism (23%), or with multiple disabilities (14%). According to survey results, the majority of students could read some words. Approximately 9% of students were rated as reading above the third-grade level. Many of the students could perform very simple mathematical tasks at least 80% of the time.

DLM-AAS aims to provide educators with an improved tool for answering such questions by giving them a comprehensive system that A) supports student learning and B) measures what students with significant cognitive disabilities know and can do. The system is designed to support individualize learning experiences for each student by presenting

questions and tasks that are appropriate for a student's cognitive and sensory abilities.

The system design rests on the premise that educators who have engaged with a student academically know a great deal about the student's characteristics, accessibility needs, and broad academic abilities in English language arts and mathematics. These educators are considered an important source of information to guide initial structuring of students' unique learning experiences.

DLM-AAS is designed to simultaneously support teacher instruction and student learning. The online tool is composed of more than 6,500 testlets, each of which includes an engagement activity and three to five assessment questions. Collectively, these testlets reveal what students know and can do as well as provide valuable insights into student understanding that can inform teacher instruction.

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